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09/807411

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO ☐  
PCT/FR99/02525

INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE  
18 October 1999

PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED  
19 October 1998

TITLE OF INVENTION

TUBE WITH MULTILAYER HEAD AND METHOD FOR MAKING SAME

APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US

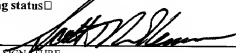
Jean-Paul MEAUSOONE; Michel BOSSHARDT; Roger LA-PALUS

Applicant herewith submits to the United States Designated/Elected Office (DO/EO/US) the following items and other information:

- 1 ☒ This is a **FIRST** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. § 371 ☐
- 2 ☐ This is a **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** submission of items concerning a filing under 35 U.S.C. § 371 ☐
- 3 ☐ This is an express request to begin national examination procedures (35 U.S.C. § 371(f)) ☐ The submission must include items (5), (6), (9) and (21) indicated below ☐
- 4 ☐ The US has been elected by the expiration of 19 months from the priority date (Article 31) ☐
- 5 ☒ A copy of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. § 371(c)(3)) ☐ published w/ International Search Report
- a ☒ is attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau) ☐
- b ☐ has been communicated by the International Bureau ☐
- c ☐ is not required, as the application was filed in the United States Receiving Office (RO/US) ☐
- 6 ☒ An English language translation of the International Application as filed (35 U.S.C. § 371(c)(2)) ☐
- a ☒ is attached hereto ☐
- b ☐ has been previously submitted under 35 U.S.C. § 54(d)(4) ☐
- 7 ☐ Amendments to the claims of the International Application under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. § 371(c)(3)) ☐
- a ☐ are attached hereto (required only if not communicated by the International Bureau) ☐
- b ☐ have been communicated by the International Bureau ☐
- c ☐ have not been made; however, the time limit for making such amendments has NOT expired ☐
- d ☐ have not been made and will not be made ☐
- 8 ☐ An English language translation of the amendments to the claims under PCT Article 19 (35 U.S.C. § 371(c)(3)) ☐
- 9 ☐ An oath or declaration of the inventor(s) (35 U.S.C. § 371(c)(4)) ☐
- 10 ☐ An English language translation of the annexes of the International Preliminary Examination Report under PCT Article 36 (35 U.S.C. § 371(c)(5)) ☐

Items 11 to 20 below concern document(s) or information included:

- 11 ☐ An Information Disclosure Statement under 37 CFR 1.97 and 1.98 ☐
- 12 ☐ An assignment document for recording ☐ A separate cover sheet in compliance with 37 CFR 3.28 and 3.31 is included ☐
- 13 ☒ A **FIRST** preliminary amendment ☐
- 14 ☐ A **SECOND** or **SUBSEQUENT** preliminary amendment ☐
- 15 ☐ A substitute specification ☐
- 16 ☐ A change of power of attorney and/or address letter ☐
- 17 ☐ A computer-readable form of the sequence listing in accordance with PCT Rule 13ter2 and 35 U.S.C. § 821 - 1.825 ☐
- 18 ☐ A second copy of the published international application under 35 U.S.C. § 54(d)(4) ☐
- 19 ☐ A second copy of the English language translation of the international application under 35 U.S.C. § 54(d)(4) ☐
- 20 ☐ Other items or information:

USCA11 PCT/PTO (Rev. 11-2000) <b>097807411</b>		INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.		ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER <b>01065</b>	
21 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The following fees are submitted: <b>BASIC NATIONAL FEE</b> (37 CFR 1.492 (a) (1) - (5)): Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO <b>\$1000.00</b> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but International Search Report prepared by the EPO or JPO <b>\$860.00</b> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) not paid to USPTO but international search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO <b>\$710.00</b> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO but all claims did not satisfy provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) <b>\$690.00</b> International preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) paid to USPTO and all claims satisfied provisions of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) <b>\$1000.00</b> <b>ENTER APPROPRIATE BASIC FEE AMOUNT =</b>				<b>CALCULATIONS PTO USE ONLY</b>          \$ 860.00	
Surcharge of <b>\$130.00</b> for furnishing the oath or declaration later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(e))				\$ 130.00	
CLAIMS	NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA	RATE	\$	
Total claims	16 - 20 =		x \$180.00	\$	
Independent claims	1 - 3 =		x \$80.00	\$	
MULTIPLE DEPENDENT CLAIM(S) (if applicable)			+ \$270.00	\$	
<b>TOTAL OF ABOVE CALCULATIONS =</b>				<b>\$ 990.00</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant claims small entity status <input type="checkbox"/> See 37 CFR 1.47 <input type="checkbox"/> The fees indicated above are reduced by 1/2 <input type="checkbox"/>				+ \$ \$	
<b>SUBTOTAL =</b>				<b>\$ 990.00</b>	
Processing fee of <b>\$130.00</b> for furnishing the English translation later than <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 months from the earliest claimed priority date (37 CFR 1.492(f))				\$	
<b>TOTAL NATIONAL FEE =</b>				<b>\$ 990.00</b>	
Fee for recording the enclosed assignment (37 CFR 1.421(h)) <input type="checkbox"/> The assignment must be accompanied by an appropriate cover sheet (37 CFR 3.28, 3.31) <input type="checkbox"/> \$40.00 per property +				\$	
<b>TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED =</b>				<b>\$ 990.00</b>	
				Amount to be refunded:	\$
				charged:	\$
a <input type="checkbox"/> A check in the amount of \$ _____ to cover the above fees is enclosed <input type="checkbox"/> b <input type="checkbox"/> Please charge my Deposit Account No. _____ in the amount of \$ _____ to cover the above fees <input type="checkbox"/> A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed <input type="checkbox"/> c <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. <b>04-0753</b> <input type="checkbox"/> A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed <input type="checkbox"/> d <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fees are to be charged to a credit card <input type="checkbox"/> <b>WARNING:</b> Information on this form may become public <input type="checkbox"/> Credit card information should not be included on this form <input type="checkbox"/> Provide credit card information and authorization on PTO-2038 <input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>NOTE: Where an appropriate time limit under 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 has not been met, a petition to revive (37 CFR 1.437 (a) or (b)) must be filed and granted to restore the application to pending status <input type="checkbox"/></b>					
SEND ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO Dennison, Scheiner, Schultz & Wakeman 612 Crystal Square 4 1745 Jefferson Davis Highway Arlington, VA 22202-3417 (703) 412-1155 Ext. 17 (703) 412-1161 FAX					
				SIGNATURE  Scott T. Wakeman NAME 37,750 REGISTRATION NUMBER	

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Docket: 01065

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

In re Application of:

Jean-Paul MEAUSOONE, et. al. Group Art Unit: (not assigned)

Serial No.: (not assigned)

Filed: (herewith)

For: TUBE WITH HEAD MADE OF MULTILAYER  
MATERIALS AND MANUFACTURING PROCESS

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Honorable Commissioner of  
Patents and Trademarks  
Washington, DC 20231

Sir:

Please amend the above-captioned application as follows:

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

2. (Amended) Head according to claim 1, in which the said internal and external layers are made of the same structure material A, typically a polyolefine chosen from among PE and PP.

5. (Amended) Tube with a head according to claim 1.

7. (Amended) Manufacturing process for a tube head (2) according to claim 1, in which:

a) into a cavity 67, formed by the cooperation of a die

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barrier material B by means of an extruder (64) for material B and a distributor (640) with n arms.

12. (Amended) Manufacturing process according to claim 10, in which a turntable or carousel (76) with a vertical axis of rotation (77), divided into p sectors (71, 72, 73, 74) p typically being equal to 8, and indexed in rotation with an angular pitch equal to  $360^\circ/p$ , successively brings each sector in front of at least three fixed stations, at different angular positions with respect to the said axis of rotation, that is a first skirt loading station (71) on the said turntable sector, then a second station (72) for co-injection and insert molding of the said heads on the said skirts, and a third section at which the tubes (74) are unloaded from the said turntable, the residence time of a sector facing each of the fixed stations being equal to the sum  $T_0+T'$ , preferably varying from 1 second to 3 seconds, and the time interval between two fixed stations being determined particularly by the angular offset between these two fixed stations.

14. (Amended) Device for the manufacturing of tube heads or tubes, using the co-injection process according to claim 7, comprising 1 to n coinjection heads (6) according to the number n of tube heads (2) to be coinjected simultaneously in 1 to n corresponding cavities (67) in which:

a) each coinjection head (6) is supplied with structure material A and barrier material B,

b) each head comprises a ring opening (66) leading to said cavity (67), which may be supplied with material A via a channel (634), or with a ring flow of material A/B/A via opening (53) of a coinjection nozzle (5) supplied with materials A and B, and

c) each head comprises means for ensuring the programmed injection of material A or of said flow A/B/A/ into said cavity (67) at predetermined times in the production cycle.

#### REMARKS

By the above amendment, the multiple dependencies have been removed from the claims. In addition, an occurrence of the phrase "barrier material A" in claim 2 has been changed to "structural material A" to make claim consistent with claim 1. An action on the merits is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dennison, Scheiner,  
Schultz & Wakeman

By: 

Scott T. Wakeman  
Reg. No. 37,750  
(703) 412-1155 Ext. 17

2. (Amended) Head according to claim 1, in which the said internal and external layers are made of the same structure [barrier] material A, typically a polyolefine chosen from among PE and PP.

5. (Amended) Tube with a head according to claim 1 [anyone of claims 1 to 4].

7. (Amended) Manufacturing process for a tube head (2) according to claim 1 [any one of claims 1 to 4], in which:

a) into a cavity 67, formed by the cooperation of a die 61 and a punch 60 and using a co-injection head 6 supplied with structure material A and barrier material B, a flow of structure material A is co-injected for a time  $T = T_0$  together with, from a time  $T = t$  until a time  $T = T_0 - t'$ , a flow of barrier material corresponding to said inner layer 25, times  $t$  and  $t'$  being chosen as short as possible such that, after the injection gate 26 has been eliminated, the ends 250, 251 of the said inner barrier material layer 25 of the said head 2 are entirely encapsulated by the said structure material A of the said internal and external layers, these ends being separated from the external medium by a thickness of at least 20  $\mu\text{m}$  of the said structure material A,

b) injection of the said structure material is continued for an additional time  $T'$  equal to at least  $T_0$ , in order to

stabilize the quantity of injected structure material.

9. (Amended) Process for manufacturing tubes (1) in which a head (2) is assembled on a skirt (3) according to claim 7 [either of claims 7 or 8], typically by welding.

11. (Amended) Process according to claim 7 [any one of claims 7 to 10], in which n tube heads (2) are made simultaneously, where n is typically between 2 and 16, using n injection heads (6) supplied with structure material A by means of an extruder (63) for material A and a distributor (630) with n arms, and supplied with barrier material B by means of an extruder (64) for material B and a distributor (640) with n arms.

12. (Amended) Manufacturing process according to claim 10 [either of claims 10 and 11], in which a turntable or carousel (76) with a vertical axis of rotation (77), divided into p sectors (71, 72, 73, 74) p typically being equal to 8, and indexed in rotation with an angular pitch equal to  $360^\circ/p$ , successively brings each sector in front of at least three fixed stations, at different angular positions with respect to the said axis of rotation, that is a first skirt loading station (71) on the said turntable sector, then a second station (72) for co-injection and insert molding of the said



heads on the said skirts, and a third section at which the tubes (74) are unloaded from the said turntable, the residence time of a sector facing each of the fixed stations being equal to the sum  $T_0 + T'$ , preferably varying from 1 second to 3 seconds, and the time interval between two fixed stations being determined particularly by the angular offset between these two fixed stations.

14. (Amended) Device for the manufacturing of tube heads or tubes, using the co-injection process according to claim 7 [any of claims 7 to 13], comprising 1 to n coinjection heads (6) according to the number n of tube heads (2) to be coinjected simultaneously in 1 to n corresponding cavities (67) in which:

a) each coinjection head (6) is supplied with structure material A and barrier material B,

b) each head comprises a ring opening (66) leading to said cavity (67), which may be supplied with material A via a channel (634), or with a ring flow of material A/B/A via opening (53) of a coinjection nozzle (5) supplied with materials A and B, and

c) each head comprises means for ensuring the programmed injection of material A or of said flow A/B/A/ into said cavity (67) at predetermined times in the production cycle.

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TUBE WITH HEAD MADE OF MULTILAYER MATERIALS  
AND MANUFACTURING PROCESS

Field of the invention

The invention relates to the domain of plastic tubes, and particularly tubes with barrier properties, typically for toothpaste tubes.

5 State of the art

European patent EP-B-0524 897 submitted in the name of the applicant discloses a process for the manufacture of tubes in which firstly, particularly in order to improve the barrier effect of tube heads, a separate single part or insert made of a 5-layer multilayer material PE/adh/EVOH/adh/PE is prepared by thermoforming, where "PE" denotes a polyethylene layer, "EVOH" denotes a vinyl ethylene alcohol copolymer layer with a barrier effect, "Adh" denotes an adhesive layer  
10 to assure cohesion between the PE and EVOH layers,

A tube skirt and the said insert are then placed on a punch of an insert molding tool, the two being manufactured separately, and the PE head is then insert molded to obtain a tube as shown in figure 1.

20 Documents AU-0545 604 and EP-A-0130 239 describe other processes for manufacturing tubes including the use of inserts, typically polybutyleneterephthalate (PBT) inserts made separately by molding.

Finally, document BE-A-666 719 describes a tube in which the head comprises an insert in the form of a truncated cone made of a folded thin sheet of aluminum, as barrier material.

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Problems can arise with known tubes according to standard practice, as a result of using inserts made separately:

- secondly, the inserts form barrier materials and therefore with a different nature from the PE. Since they are made separately, they add a non-negligible 15 percentage to the weight of the tube, and insert materials (particularly PBT) are immiscible with PE which is the typical material used in tubes, introducing a problem with recycling the materials used in the tubes.

25       The heads and tubes according to the invention  
solve all these problems simultaneously.

According to a first purpose of the invention, the  
30 plastic tube head, designed to be assembled with a  
skirt to form a tube, comprising a typically threaded

orifice and a shoulder comprising an annular connection part to the said skirt, is characterized in that:

a) the said head is formed by co-injection and comprises a multilayer material containing an internal layer, an external layer in structure material, typically a polyolefine, and at least one inner layer made of a thermoplastic barrier material,

b) the said inner layer is encased by the said internal and external layers, including at the ends of the said head where the said internal and external layers are joined together in a polyolefine layer, the distances "e" and "e'" between each of the ends of the said inner layer and the corresponding end of the said head being between 0.02 mm and 5 mm and preferably less than 3 mm, such that the said inner layer made of a barrier material extends over the greatest possible height, while its ends remain encased or encapsulated by the junction of the said internal and external layers.

The invention introduces a radical change in the design of the said head, firstly in the sense that the said internal layer is completely immersed and encased by a so-called structure material A, typically a polyolefine material - but it may also be another extrudable material such as a PET or a PA - without discontinuity or break in the material flow as is the case with the use of an insert according to the prior art, and secondly in that the said inner layer may be extended as far as required and as close as required to the ends of the said head, the only limit being that this layer is not in contact with the outside and remains encased by the structure material A.

Since there are no inserts or add-on parts, the tube according to the invention has several important advantages for persons skilled in the art, concerning the cost, the compatibility of the head and skirt materials and therefore recycling, since a typical insert is made of PBT, a unique material that does not exist in the skirt, and the fact that the performance of the head can be adapted depending on needs, knowing that not all packaged products have the same requirements concerning impermeability of the head, and therefore that the nature of the barrier layer and its thickness can be varied to obtain tubes adapted to needs at minimum cost.

Said barrier layer may be formed from one or more layers which overlap at least in part.

#### Description of the figures

Figures 1a and 1b are axial sectional views of a tube head 2 according to the state of the art provided with an insert 4. This head has an orifice 20 in which a thread 201 is formed, and a connection shoulder 21 to a skirt 3.

Figure 1a shows a view of a head 2 with its injection gate 26 at the exit from the insert molding station where the head 2 is molded on the skirt 3.

Figure 1b corresponds to the head of the tube 2 in figure 1a after the injection gate 26 has been eliminated and after the orifice 200 has been formed.

Figure 1b shows an enlarged view of the section through the skirt 3 that typically comprises a layer 30 made of a barrier material B coated with an external

layer 31 and an internal layer 32 in structure material A.

Figures 2a and 2b correspond to figures 1a and 1b and to the invention. The material forming the head 2 comprises an inner layer made of barrier material B 25 coated on the outside with an outer layer 23 and on the inside with an internal layer 24 in structure material A.

Figure 2b shows distances denoted "e" and "e'" between the ends of the said internal layer 24 and the ends of the head.

Figure 3 shows a vertical sectional view of a co-injection nozzle 5 with a vertical axis of symmetry 10 having a central duct 50, an outer ring duct 52 for injection of material A, a median ring duct 51 for injection of barrier material B and a common exit opening 53.

Figure 4 contains a vertical section showing a diagrammatic view of an individual co-injection device. This device comprises a nozzle 5 supplied firstly by material A (typically PE) via an injection device for material A comprising upstream a supply channel 633 fitted with a valve or closing slide 635, a proportioning piston 632 supplied with material A from an extruder 63 and fitted with a non-return valve 631, and secondly with barrier material B by a barrier material B distributor comprising a supply channel 643 fitted with a valve or closing slide 644 and, upstream, an extruder 64 of barrier material B.

The nozzle 5 comprises a shutter 65 for its common opening 53 and terminates in an external opening 66 cooperating with the head mold tooling 2 by injection.

The nozzle could comprise axial shutter means (not shown) typically slide means, with which to shutter the exit of material A, that of material B or both materials A and B at the same time.

- 5       The mold tooling typically comprises a die 61 and a punch 60 on which a tube skirt 3 has been placed, the space between the die and punch forming cavity 67 in which said head 2 is formed by coinjection. The piston 62 applies the punch plus die assembly in contact with
- 10   the said external opening 66 at a sufficient pressure to inject the said head 2.

In this figure the distributors of material A and material B for the simultaneous production of several tube heads are not shown.

- 15       Figures 5 and 6 show another modality of the process and device according to the invention.

- Figure 5 is a principle diagram showing in axial section a co-injection device for structure material A (on the left side of the figure) and for material B (on
- 20   the right side of the figure). This figure shows the distributors of material A 630 and of material B 640, intended to feed six cavities 67 simultaneously. The supply circuit for material A comprises an injection piston 632 and a non-return valve 631 used to supply
- 25   the co-injection head 6 with material A at the required flow rate and pressure.

- The device comprises a closing slide 65 with a slide 650 having 4 positions through side movement of the slide 650 which is supplied either with multilayer
- 30   material A and B via opening 53 of nozzle 5, or with material A only via the side duct 634 for material A which leads either to cavity 67 or to a drain 68. Slide

650 is shown in cross-section in figures 5 and 5b and in longitudinal section in figure 5a in which the 4 positions are shown:

Position 1: the slide is full, so that none of  
5 inlets 53, 634 and none of the outlets towards the cavity 67 or the drain 68 communicate.

Position 2: the arrival of material A, 634, is made to communicate with cavity 67, the arrival of multilayer material A and B via opening 53 being  
10 shuttered,

Position 3: the arrival of multiplayer material A and B via opening 53 of nozzle 5 is made to communicate with cavity 67, the arrival of material A, 634, being shuttered.

Position 4: the arrival of multiplayer material A and B via opening 53 of nozzle 5 is made to communicate with the drain 68, a position which is typically used not during the production cycle, but in the event of  
15 stoppage of the said device before re-start up of the production cycle.  
20

Figure 6 is a perspective view of the distributors of material A, 630, and material B, 640, respectively supplied by the extruders of material A, 63, and of material B, 64, which feed the 6 co-injection heads 6  
25 each comprising a nozzle 5 and a side duct 634 forming the two inlets to the slide valve 65. This figure does not show the 6 injection pistons for material A, 632. This figure shows the arrangement of the slide valves 65 each having two "inlets" or feed points 53 and 634,  
30 and two "outlets" 66 towards cavity 67 and drain 68, these "inlets" and "outlets" forming a cross in a plane perpendicular to the axis of the valve 65.



Figure 7 is a diagrammatic overhead view of a tube manufacturing unit with six injection nozzles 5.

Figure 7a diagrammatically shows a sectional view of a skirt 3, and figure 7b shows a co-injection output tube with a head corresponding to figure 2a.

Figure 8 illustrates the execution of an injection cycle with a total duration of  $T_o + T'$ , injection of structure material A (typically a polyolefine of PE type) through valve 635 varying from time  $T=0$  to  $T=T_o$ , whereas the injection of barrier materials B through the valve or slide 645 starts at time  $T=t$  and terminates at time  $T=T_o - t'$ , the duration  $T'$  being a stabilization time.

The axis denoted "P650" shows the position of slide 650 when the device used comprises this type of 4-position slide, designated 1 to 4, as shown in figures 5a and 5b.

#### Detailed description of the invention

The said internal layer 24 and external layer 23 in head 2 of tube (1 according to the invention may be made of the same polyolefine, preferably chosen to be a polyethylene or PE, and the said barrier material may be chosen from known extrudable barrier materials and is preferably chosen to be a polyvinyl alcohol or EVOH, but as already indicated the invention is not limited to specific materials, other than that these materials must be extrudable or co-extrudable.

Moreover, it is also possible according to the invention to have as structure material a material A for the external layer 23 and a material A' different to the previous one for the internal layer 24.

Preferably, the said multilayer material has a 3-layer "A/B/A" structure, where A and B respectively denote a structure material layer, typically a polyolefine and preferably PE - that is the internal layer 24 and external layer 23, and a barrier material layer - that is the inner layer (25) typically made of EVOH, the layer of barrier material B having an average thickness of between 0.02 and 0.5 mm, and preferably an average thickness of 0.04 and 0.2 mm, for a total thickness of the said 3-layer structure typically equal to 1.2 mm.

It was observed that it is not necessary, according to the invention, to insert an adhesive layer between the structure material layer A and the barrier material B, even though materials A and B may not adhere to one another, as is the case with PE and EVOH.

Also, layer B may optionally be replaced by several B layers of narrower thickness, which overlap in full or in part, possibly with layers A inserted in between.

As already described, the thickness of the barrier material layer may be varied as a function of the required performances, considering the nature of the packaged product.

Another purpose of the invention consists of the tubes 1 that comprise a head 2 according to the invention.

Preferably, the assembly of the said skirt and the said head is formed by co-injection of the said head on the said previously formed skirt.

Although the heads can be made separately and then assembled with the skirts, it is advantageous to

proceed as shown in figure 4, in other words forming the head by injection on a skirt, combining the formation of the head and the head and skirt assembly in a single step, the skirt possibly being manufactured  
5 apart.

Another purpose of the invention consists of a process for manufacturing a multilayer head according to the invention.

In this process:

10 a) into a cavity 67, formed by the cooperation of a die 61 and a punch 60 and using a co-injection head 6 supplied with structure material A and barrier material B, a flow of structure material A is co-injected for a time  $T = T_0$  with, from a time  $T = t$  until a time  $T =$   
15  $T_0 - t'$ , a flow of barrier material corresponding to said inner layer 25, times  $t$  and  $t'$  being chosen as short as possible such that, after the injection gate 26 has been eliminated, the ends 250, 251 of the said inner barrier material layer 25 of the said head 2 are  
20 entirely encapsulated by the said structure material A of the said internal and external layers 24, 23, the said ends 250, 251 being separated from the external medium by a thickness of at least  $20 \mu\text{m}$  of the said structure material A,

25 b) injection of the said structure material A is continued for an additional time  $T'$  equal to at least  $T_0$ , in order to stabilize the quantity of injected structure material.

Typically:

- $T_0$  can vary from 0.1 s to 1 s
- 30 -  $T_0 + T'$  can vary from 1 s to 3 s
- $t$  can range from 0.01  $T_0$  to 0.5  $T_0$
- $t'$  can range from 0.01  $T_0$  to 0.65  $T_0$

This process will be better understood with reference to figures 3, 4, 5, 5a, 5b and 8.

It can be clearly seen in figure 8 that the injection of the barrier material B begins after the  
5 injection of structure material A and terminates before the injection of structure material A.

Thus, it is clear that with all means defined by the invention, it is possible during a full head production cycle T, to regulate the introduction of  
10 each injected material and thus to control both distances "e" and "e'".

Furthermore, these means can also modify the thickness of the barrier material layer B at will, by varying the relative flows of the barrier material B  
15 and structure material A in the co-injection nozzle 5.

A further purpose of the invention is a process for manufacturing tubes having a head 2 according to the invention.

According to a first embodiment, a head according  
20 to the invention can be assembled to the skirt by any known means, typically by any type of weld. But preferably, said head and said skirt are assembled by co-injecting the said head on the said skirt as shown in figure 4.

25 A manufacturing unit using the process according to the invention is shown diagrammatically in figure 7. In this industrial process a turntable or carousel 76 with a vertical axis of rotation 77 divided into p sectors 71, 72, 73, 74 where p is typically equal to 8  
30 and is indexed in rotation with an angular pitch equal to  $360^\circ/p$ , brings each sector successively in front of at least three fixed stations staggered at an angle

relative to said axis of rotation, that is a first skirt loading station 71 on the said sector of the turntable, then a second station 72 for co-injection and insert molding of the said heads on the said skirts, and a third section at which the tubes 74 are unloaded from the said turntable, the residence time of a sector facing each of the fixed stations being equal to the sum  $T_0+T'$ , preferably varying from 1 second to 3 seconds, and the time interval between two fixed stations being determined particularly by the angular offset between these two fixed stations.

Figure 7 shows the case in which, with  $p$  equal to 8, the angular offset between the co-injection station 72 and the unloading station 74 is equal to  $\alpha$ , typically equal to  $180^\circ$ , such that the tube cooling time between the co-injection station and the unloading station is approximately equal to  $(T_0+T') \cdot (p/360^\circ) \cdot \alpha$ .

#### Example embodiment

All figures (except figures 1a and 1b) are related to the invention and illustrate the invention.

The tube heads obtained according to the examples are shown in figures 2a and 2b.

The dimensions of these heads are standard dimensions of toothpaste tube heads, the height of the head being 20 mm and the tube diameter being 35 mm.

The materials used are PE for the structure material, and EVOH for the barrier material.

The thickness of the multilayer material at the shoulder 21 is typically 1.2 mm, and the thicknesses of the PE layers 23,24 and the barrier material layer 25 are 1 mm for the outer layer of PE 23, 0.05 mm for the

inner layer of EVOH 25 and 0.15 mm for the internal PE layer 24.

The distances "e" and "e'" obtained for the heads are equal to 2 mm.

5        These heads are made using co-injection nozzles 5 as shown on figure 5.

10        This type of nozzle 5 is supplied with PE via duct 633 and with EVOH via duct 634, and comprises means for regulating and opening/closing said ducts. Since the quantity of PE is much greater than the quantity of EVOH, each nozzle 5 comprises a proportioning piston 633 that injects a precise quantity of PE into the said cavity - a non-return valve 631 preventing any backflow of PE. This proportioning piston 633 is filled during idle time while the tube is being changed.

15        Nozzle 5 has an orifice 53 which is automatically closed by a non-return valve 65 when the cavity 67, formed by cooperation of punch 60 with die 61, is not - by means of piston 62 - applied against the external orifice 66 for the purpose of co-injecting PE and EVOH.

20        According to one variant of the invention shown in figures 5 to 6, nozzle 5 is only used for co-injecting materials A and B, the injection of material A alone being made via a specific duct 634 which does not cross through the nozzle 5, the changeover from one injection type to another being made by means of a slide valve 65 with a slide 650 which moves sideways and has 4 positions as explained in relation to figures 5, 5a, 5b and 6.

30        The sequence of a production cycle for a head 2 is illustrated in figure 8.

In order to guarantee good productivity, the co-injection station on the production line used to implement the process according to the invention comprises six nozzles 5 in parallel, supplied with material A via ducts or supply channels 633, and with material B via channels 643. The co-injection head 6 in figure 6, in addition to direct supply from nozzle 5 of material A via channel 633, also comprises a supply of material A via side channels 643.

Time To comprises the cycle change, the slide being in position "1", I which there is no flow of material, this cycle change corresponding to the replacement of the full cavities by empty cavities, and is conducted during a time interval that is typically less than 0.1 To.

The industrial production line is shown diagrammatically by the overhead view in figure 7. It comprises a carousel 76 or turntable rotating around its vertical axis 77 divided into 8 sectors that pass in sequence in front of a first station 71 supplying skirts 3, then in front of a second co-injection station 72 offset at an angle of  $90^\circ$  ( $360^\circ/2/8$ ) from the first, then in front of a third unloading station 74 at an angle of  $270^\circ$  from the first station, such

that the tube head cooling time on the carrousel is equal to approximately  $4.(T+T')$ .

The productivity of this line is about 10 000 tubes per hour, substantially equal to  $6 \times 3600 / (T_0 + T')$ ,  
5 where  $T_0 + T'$  is close to 2 s.

#### Advantages of the invention

The invention provides an advantageous alternative to the state of the art. As already mentioned, the  
10 invention is a means of avoiding the use of inserts, which are made separately from a special material and which act as a barrier material.

Therefore, the invention can solve all problems related to the presence of inserts, whether in respect  
15 of the compatibility of materials and recycling of tubes, the extension of the insert and its barrier effect over the entire height of the head, the adaptation of the barrier in relation to the content and conditions of use, or finally in respect of the  
20 cost of the tubes.

The invention is a means of obtaining EVOH layers as thin as possible and as desired in relation to required barrier impermeability, whereas an insert  
25 needs to have minimum stiffness and therefore a minimum thickness owing to handling requirements and since it must be manufactured separately.

Therefore, the invention provides a very general means to enable a tube manufacturer to meet most requirements, particularly regulatory and legislative  
30 requirements, related to tube materials and their recycling.



## LIST OF REFERENCES

TUBE	1
AXIS SYMMETRY OF THE TUBE	10
TUBE HEAD	2
ORIFICE	20
OPENING	200
THREAD	201
UPPER RIM	202
SHOULDER	21
SKIRT CONNECTION ZONE	22
EXTERNAL LAYER	23
INTERNAL LAYER	24
INNER LAYER (BARRIER - B)	25
TOP END OF B	250
BOTTOM END OF B	251
INJECTION GATE	26
SKIRT	3
BARRIER MATERIAL	30
EXTERNAL LAYER	31
INTERNAL LAYER	32
INSERT OF PRIOR ART	4
CO-INJECTION NOZZLE	5
CENTRAL CHANNEL (material A)	50
MEDIAN RING DUCT (B)	51
OUTER RING DUCT (A)	52
COMMON OPENING/DUCT	53
COINJECTION HEAD	6
PUNCH	60

DIE .....	61
SMALL PISTON .....	62
EXTRUDER for material A .....	63
DISTRIBUTOR of material A.....	630
NON-RETURN VALVE.....	631
INJECTION PISTON.....	632
SUPPLY CHANNEL (A).....	633
SIDE CHANNEL (A).....	634
VALVE (A).....	635
EXTRUDER for material B .....	64
DISTRIBUTOR of material B.....	640
SUPPLY CHANNEL (B).....	643
VALVE (B).....	644
SLIDE VALVE - 4-positions .....	65
MOBILE SLIDE.....	650
RING OPENING .....	66
CAVITY between head of punch and die ....	67
DRAIN .....	68
TUBE MANUFACTURING UNIT .....	7
SKIRT SUPPLY .....	70
SUPPLY STATION .....	71
COINJECTION STATION .....	72
COOLING STATION .....	73
UNLOADING STATION .....	74
TUBE TRANSFER .....	75
TABLE OR CARROUSEL .....	76
VERTICAL AXIS OF TABLE .....	77

CLAIMS

1. Plastic tube head (2), designed to be assembled with a skirt (3) to form a tube (1), comprising a typically threaded orifice (20) and a shoulder (21) comprising an annular connection part (22) to the said skirt, characterized in that,

a) the said head (2) is formed by co-injection and comprises a thermoplastic multilayer material comprising an internal layer (24) and an external layer (23) in structure material A, and at least one inner layer (25) in barrier material B,

b) the said inner layer (25) is encased by the said internal layer (24) and external layer (23), including at the ends of the said head where the said internal and external layers are joined together in one layer, the distances "e" and "e'" between each of the ends (250, 251) of the said inner layer and the corresponding end of the said head being between 0.02 mm and 5 mm, such that the said inner layer made of a barrier material (25) extends over the greatest possible height, while its ends remain encased or encapsulated by the junction of the said internal layer (24) and external layer (23).

2. Head according to claim 1, in which the said internal and external layers are made of the same barrier material A, typically a polyolefine chosen from among PE and PP.

3. Head according to claim 2, in which the said barrier material B is typically chosen to be a polyvinyl alcohol or EVOH.

4. Head according to claim 3, in which the said multilayer material has at least a 3-layer "A/B/A" structure, where A and B respectively denote a layer of structure material, typically PE, and a layer of barrier material, typically EVOH, the average thickness of the layer of barrier material being between 0.02 and 0.5 mm.

5. Tube with a head according to anyone of claims 1 to 4.

10 6. Tube according to claim 5 in which the assembly of said skirt and said head is made by co-injection of the said head (2) onto the said previously formed skirt (3).

15 7. Manufacturing process for a tube head (2) according to any one of claims 1 to 4, in which:

20 a) into a cavity 67, formed by the cooperation of a die 61 and a punch 60 and using a co-injection head 6 supplied with structure material A and barrier material B, a flow of structure material A is co-injected for a time  $T = T_0$  together with, from a time  $T = t$  until a time  $T = T_0 - t'$ , a flow of barrier material corresponding to said inner layer 25, times  $t$  and  $t'$  being chosen as short as possible such that, after the injection gate 26 has been eliminated, the ends 250, 251 of the said inner barrier material layer 25 of the said head 2 are entirely encapsulated by the said structure material A of the said internal and external layers, these ends being separated from the external medium by a thickness of at least 20  $\mu\text{m}$  of the said structure material A,

b) injection of the said structure material is continued for an additional time  $T'$  equal to at least

To, in order to stabilize the quantity of injected structure material.

8. Manufacturing process according to claim 7 in which:

- 5 - To can vary from 0.1 s to 1 s
- To+T' can vary from 1 s to 3 s
- t can range from 0.01 To to 0.1 To
- t' can range from 0.02 To to 0.2 To

9. Process for manufacturing tubes (1) in which a  
10 head (2) is assembled on a skirt (3) according to either of claims 7 or 8, typically by welding.

10. Process according to claim 9, in which the said tube head (2) and the said skirt (3) are assembled by co-injecting said head (2) on said skirt (3).

15 11. Process according to any one of claims 7 to 10, in which n tube heads (2) are made simultaneously, where n is typically between 2 and 16, using n injection heads (6) supplied with structure material A by means of an extruder (63) for material A  
20 and a distributor (630) with n arms, and supplied with barrier material B by means of an extruder (64) for material B and a distributor (640) with n arms.

12. Manufacturing process according to either of claims 10 and 11, in which a turntable or carousel (76)  
25 with a vertical axis of rotation (77), divided into p sectors (71, 72, 73, 74) p typically being equal to 8, and indexed in rotation with an angular pitch equal to  $360^\circ/p$ , successively brings each sector in front of at least three fixed stations, at different angular  
30 positions with respect to the said axis of rotation, that is a first skirt loading station (71) on the said turntable sector, then a second station (72) for co-

injection and insert molding of the said heads on the said skirts, and a third section at which the tubes (74) are unloaded from the said turntable, the residence time of a sector facing each of the fixed stations being equal to the sum  $T_0+T'$ , preferably varying from 1 second to 3 seconds, and the time interval between two fixed stations being determined particularly by the angular offset between these two fixed stations.

13. Process according to claim 12, in which, with  $p$  equal to 4, the angular offset between the co-injection station (72) and the unloading station (74) is equal to  $\alpha$ , typically equal to  $180^\circ$ , such that the tube cooling time between the co-injection station and the unloading station is approximately equal to  $(T_0+T') \cdot (p/360^\circ) \cdot \alpha$ .

14. Device for the manufacturing of tube heads or tubes, using the co-injection process according to any of claims 7 to 13, comprising 1 to  $n$  coinjection heads (6) according to the number  $n$  of tube heads (2) to be coinjected simultaneously in 1 to  $n$  corresponding cavities (67) in which:

a) each coinjection head (6) is supplied with structure material A and barrier material B,

b) each head comprises a ring opening (66) leading to said cavity (67), which may be supplied with material A via a channel (634), or with a ring flow of material A/B/A via opening (53) of a coinjection nozzle (5) supplied with materials A and B, and

c) each head comprises means for ensuring the programmed injection of material A or of said flow A/B/A/ into said cavity (67) at predetermined times in

the production cycle.

15. Device according to claim 14 in which said means for ensuring said programmed injection is typically a slide valve (65).

5           16. Device according to claim 15 in which said  
slide valve has 4 positions:

1. closing of opening (53) and channel (634): no material flow,
2. placing in communication of channel (634) and cavity (67): injection of material A into cavity (67),
3. placing in communication of opening (53) and cavity (67): injection of the ring flow of multilayer material A/B/A/,
4. placing in communication of opening (53) with the outside: optional draining of opening (53).

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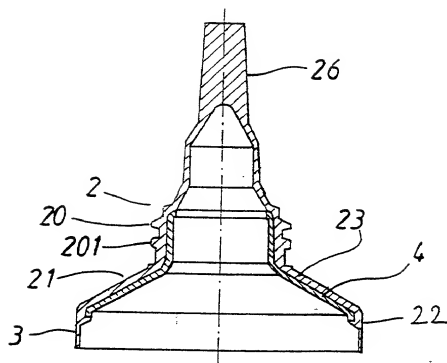


FIG. 1a

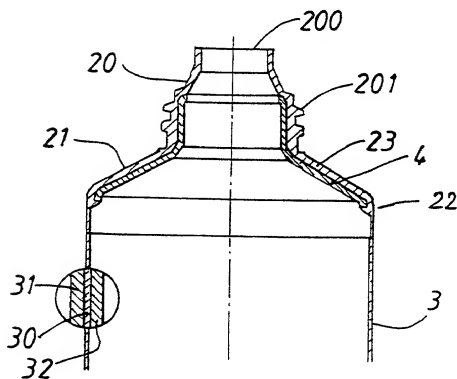


FIG. 1b



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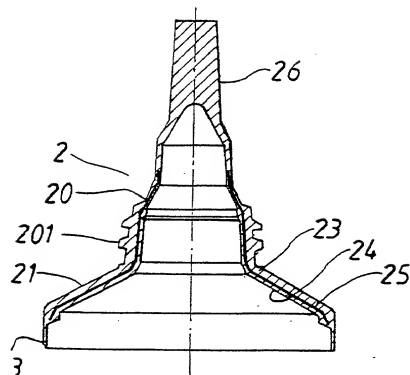


FIG. 2a

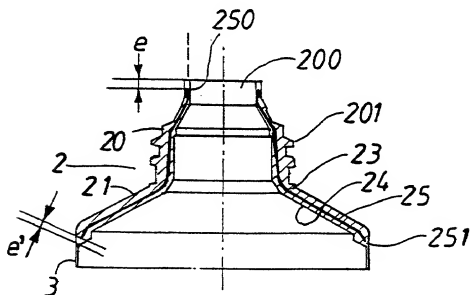
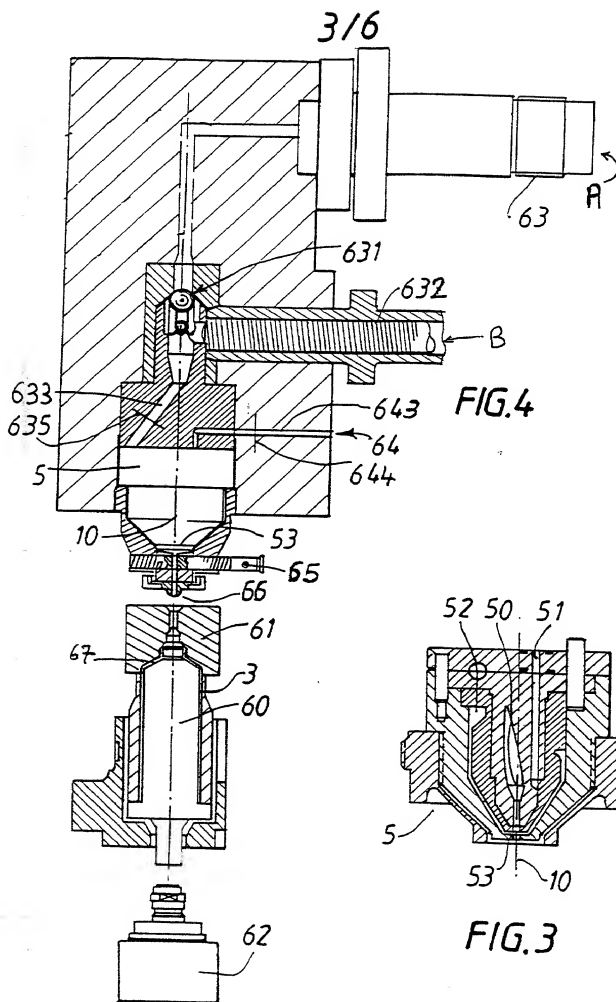


FIG. 2b



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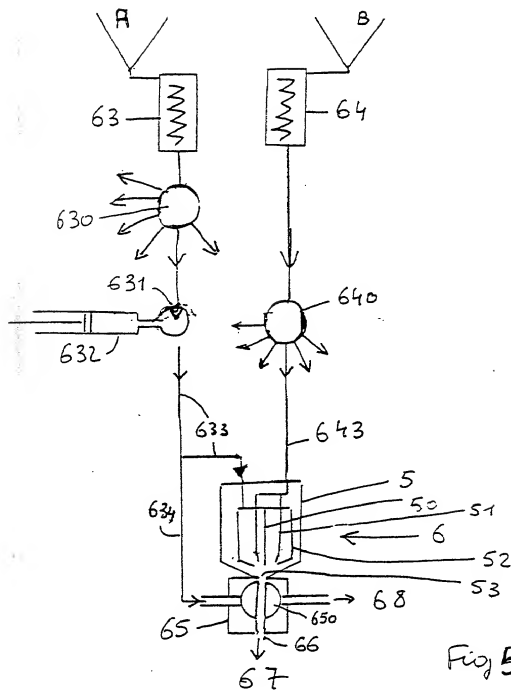


Fig 5

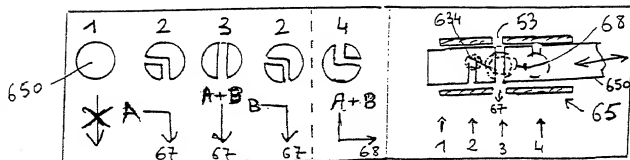


Fig 5b

Fig 5a

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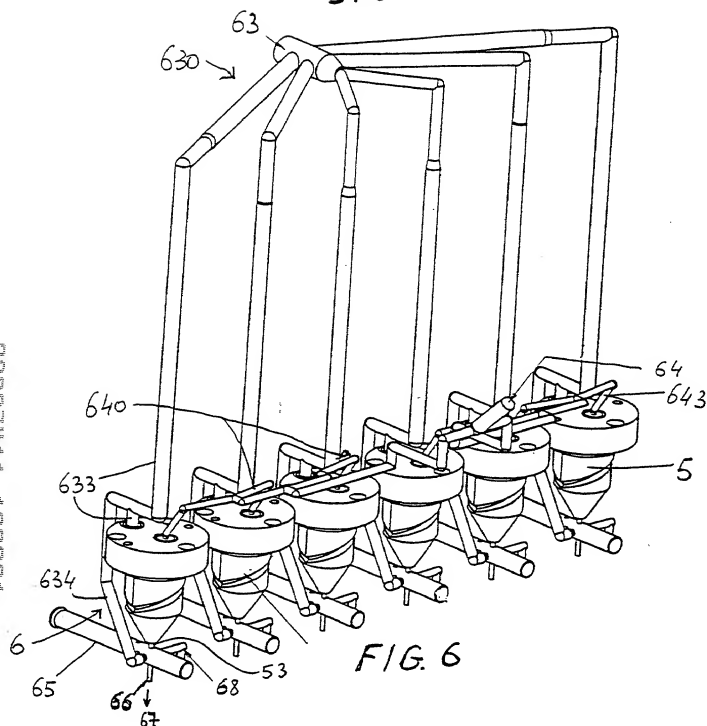


FIG. 6

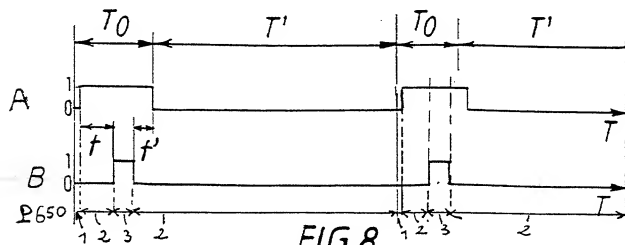


FIG. 8

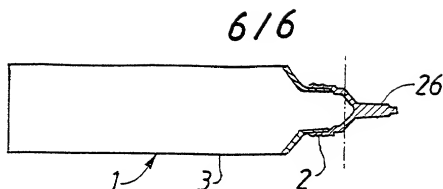


FIG. 7b

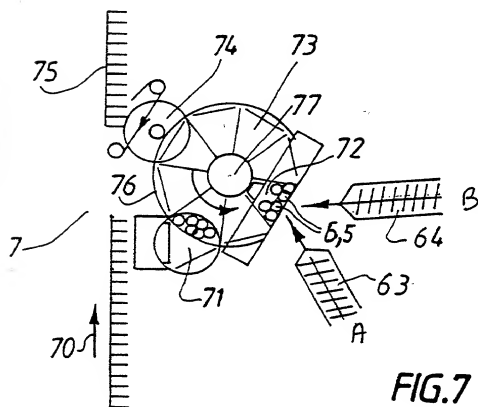


FIG. 7

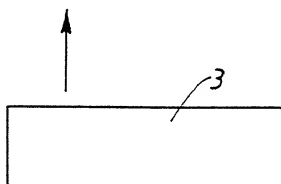


FIG. 7a

PCT/PTO 09 OCT 2001  
09/11/01

# DECLARATION FOR UTILITY OR DESIGN PATENT APPLICATION

Docket No. 01065

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled  
TUBE WITH MULTILAYER HEAD AND METHOD FOR MAKING SAME

specification of which

(check one) XX is described and claimed in PCT International Application PCT/FR99/02525

filed on (MM/DD/YYYY) October 18, 1999

amended on

(if applicable)

(OR) is described in United States Application Number

filed on (MM/DD/YYYY)

(OR) is attached hereto.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR §1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under 35 U.S.C. §119(a)-(d) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or 365(a) of any PCT international application which designated at least one country other than the United States of America, listed below and have also identified below, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or any PCT international application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Prior Foreign Application Number(s)	Country	Foreign Filing Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Priority Claimed? Yes No
98/13223	France	October 19, 1998	XX

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. 119(e) of any United States Provisional Application(s) listed below.


I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. §120 of any United States application(s), or 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States of America, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR §1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:


As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following registered practitioner(s) to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith:

Donald L. Dennison  
Burton Scheiner

Reg. No. 19920  
Reg. No. 24018

Ira J. Schultz  
Scott T. Wakeman

Reg. No. 28666  
Reg. No. 37750

DIRECT ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:  
DENNISON, SCHEINER, SCHULTZ & WAKEMAN  
1245 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 612  
Arlington, Virginia 22202-3417

DIRECT TELEPHONE CALLS TO:  
(703)412-1155  
(703)412-1161 (fax)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under 18 U.S.C. §1001 and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

Full name of sole or first inventor Jean-Paul MEAUSOONE

(First, Middle, Family Name or Surname)

Inventor's signature *Jean-Paul Meausoone*

Date 05/11/2001

Residence Greenwich, Connecticut  
(City, State, Country)

Citizenship France

Full Post Office Address 5, Sound View Terrace, Greenwich, Connecticut 06830

20 Full name of second joint inventor Michel BOSSHARDT  
(First, Middle, Family Name or Surname)

Second inventor's signature Michel Boshardt Date May, 2nd 2001

Residence Sainte-Menehould, France FRX Citizenship France

(City, State, Country)  
Full Post Office Address 39, rue Camille Margaine, F-51800 Sainte-Menehould, France  
Rev. 8/99

30 Full name of third joint inventor Roger LAPALUS  
(First, Middle, Family Name or Surname)

Third inventor's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Residence Sainte-Menehould, France FRX Citizenship France  
(City, State, Country)

Full Post Office Address 50, rue Gaillot Aubert, F-51800 Sainte-Menehould, France

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